

All in a Day's Work: Images of Farming and Ranching from the Collection of the Beach Museum of Art Education Workbook

(for use with the virtual exhibition)

“Farming is healthy and moral and respectable and in the long run may become profitable.”
Chase County Leader, 1871

The first European people in Kansas didn't stay – they were travelers along the Santa Fe and Oregon Trails, on their way to “better” places. Kansas Territory was originally considered part of the “Great American Desert,” and not a good place for humans to live. But by the mid-1850s people were settling in Kansas, and many more came as part of the Homestead Act of 1862.

Farming on the tallgrass prairies began soon after the area was declared a Territory in 1851 and extended into the more arid areas of western Kansas in the wet years of the 1880s. Corn was the original cash crop. Kansas farmers included large groups of European immigrants, including the Mennonites who brought Turkey Red wheat to the state in 1874, and wheat became the number one cash crop.

After 1865, ranchers moved into the high plains and cattle ranches began to boom in the 1880s. Kansas cow towns included Abilene, with rail connection to Chicago, followed by Wichita, Ellsworth and Dodge City. Many of the cowboys were freed slaves and Mexicans. Cattle ranching was particularly suited to the Flint Hills, which were difficult to cultivate because of the stone.

Farmers and ranchers in Kansas changed from solitary figures to groups of “professionals” who worked together to deal with the social and economic hardships of the agricultural life. The first chartered Grange in Kansas was formed in Hiawatha in 1872. It was succeeded by the Patrons of Husbandry, the National Farm Alliance, the National Farmers Union, and, finally, Kansas Farm Bureau was formed in 1919 to deal with issues of social and economic decline, production during World War I, the Depression, and the drought.

According to the 2002 U.S. Census, there are 493 farms in Riley County, 245 farms in Geary County, and 842 farms in Pottawatomie County. Kansas State University is well known for its research and teaching in animal sciences and agronomy. Kansas Farm Bureau, based in Manhattan, Kansas, serves approximately 115,000 members. This means that agriculture is still an important part of our lives.

Note: Use the icons at the beginning of each section to help you find the artworks in the virtual exhibition appropriate for discussion.



Farmers &
Ranchers



Weather



Animals



Work



Buildings

Farmers and Ranchers



“The typical posture is more nearly that of one who has fallen, headlong into deep water and has now arisen to stand feet apart, hands hanging a bit away from the body, back slightly bent, clothing dripping and with a facial expression which says, ‘Oh, aint this a mess!’ The only difference is that the bath is not of water and the dripping is – just dirt.”

A.B. Madison, “Mere Existence,” *Fowler News* (25 April 1935)

Character

Look at the pictures of the farmers and ranchers. Make a list below to describe their character (personality traits).

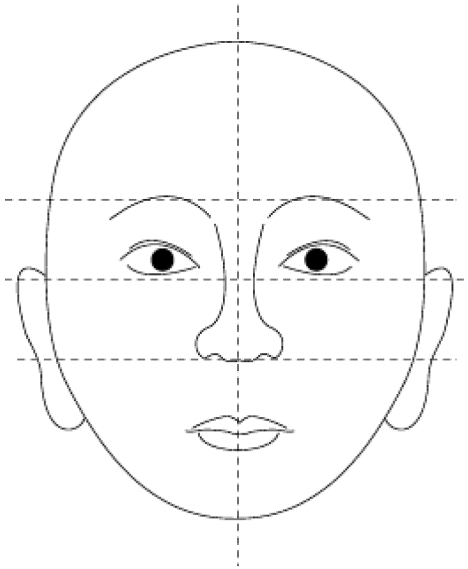
- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.

Do you think farmers and ranchers had any differences in personalities or life styles? What were they and why?

Draw a portrait (head) of a farmer or rancher.

Think about this character as you described it above. See if you can add details to the face that help us see his character. You might want to look carefully at *Our Good Earth* by John Steuart Curry and *Man of the Soil* by Steven Dohanos.

Use the diagram to help you get the correct proportions of the facial features. Some things to note: The face is symmetrical, the nose takes up the center third of the face and the bottom of the eyes are at the horizontal halfway point.





Weather

The Great Plains is and was home to hot summers, cool winters, wind, severe storms, and tornados. Drought years were common, the worst being 1884, 1894, and the Dust Bowl of 1934-39. On the other hand, floods were frequent and farmers using bottom lands near rivers and creeks were especially susceptible to losing crops. In the winter, floods manifested themselves as blizzards. Wind swept through the Great Plains on a consistent basis, and dry air masses from Canada collide with damp air masses from the Gulf of Mexico and cause severe thunderstorms and tornados. The American Scene painters of the 1930s reveled in painting and drawing these forces of nature which impacted daily life.

The Dust Bowl 1934-1939



Weather Watch

Weather is one of the number one worries of a farmer or rancher. How would each of these weather conditions impact a farm or ranch?

Drought

Flood

Blizzard

Tornado

Weather Math

The Kansas River flooded twice in 1941, in June and in October. The June 1941 flood had the following recorded water levels. Figure out how many feet above flood level each location was:

Manhattan (flood stage 17 feet) June 11, 1941, 23.5 feet

Wamego (flood stage 16 feet) June 11, 1941, 21.88 feet

Topeka (flood stage 21 feet) June 12, 1941, 25.84 feet

Make a bar graph that shows the above information. You can put each location on the horizontal axis and the height measurements on the perpendicular axis. Indicate the feet above flood level in red. You may want to round your flood measurements to the nearest half foot.

Tornados

“I looked up and to my astonishment I saw right into the heart of a tornado. There was a circular opening in the center of the funnel, about fifty to one hundred feet in diameter and extending straight upward for a distance of at least half a mile, as best I could judge under the circumstances. The walls of this opening were rotating clouds and the whole was brilliantly lighted with constant flashes of lightning which zigzagged from side to side.”

Will Keller, Kansas farmer, June 22, 1928, in *Twister: The Science of Tornados*, Keay Davidson, New York: Pocketbooks, 1996, pg. 90.

What do you think it would be like to be in a tornado? *The Bravest of Us All* by Marsha Diane Arnold and illustrated by Brad Sneed gives us a fictional version. Both Arnold and Sneed grew up in Newton, Kansas, so they probably had a good idea of what a tornado was like. The quote above is by a farmer who actually lived through a tornado. There are additional stories and photographs at the following websites: www.tornadochaser.com and www.tornadoproject.com

Story and Art Project

Write a short story about being in a tornado and create an illustration for it! Make sure that you describe the sounds, smells, and physical feelings.

To create your artwork think about what colors and textures you would use. Pastels might be a good media for the clouds and tornado because the chalk would blend together like the dust and dirt in the storm. Think of something bright and shiny that you could use to make the lightning. You could use cutouts of objects from magazines for the things flying about.



Animals

Acrostic Poem

Choose one of the animals featured in the exhibition to write an acrostic poem below. We have done one about pigs for you! You can include more than one word for each letter

Pink and pert
Indolent (means lazy)
Grubby and grimy

Space for your poem

Who did What?

Raising farm animals involved the whole family. List some of the different types of animals on a farm, what needed to be done to take care of them, and who was responsible for the job. Use the artworks and readings for hints.

Animal	Jobs	Who did the job

Ranch Math

A cow and calf pair needs at least 10 acres of land a year for grazing. How many cow and calf pairs can a rancher raise on a quarter section (160 acres) of land?

A rancher wants to fence off an eighth of a section of land to keep his bulls separate from the cows. If a quarter section is one square mile, how much barbed wire will he need to make a single strand fence? (Hint – there are 5280 feet in a mile)

Kansas Cattle Figures

1920 — 2,975 thousand head of cattle

1935 — 3,386 thousand head of cattle

How many more cattle were there in 1935?



Work on the Farm or Ranch

Changes in Farming Technology

A typical Kansas farmer in 1900 was still using an Angell plow with a single blade pulled by a horse to break the sod. Steam engine tractors were in use by the 1890s, followed by gasoline tractors in 1915, but it was not until 1941 that half the prairie farmers were using them. The combine was developed in 1918, but threshing rigs were still in use until about 1950. The new items were expensive and the Depression of the 1930s meant that many farmers could not update their equipment. Gas rationing during WWII led to many farmers going back to animal power.

Water and irrigation have been key developments in Kansas agriculture, especially with a cycle of droughts and new knowledge gained after the Dust Bowl. During the drought of the 1890s more and more farmers began to tap ground water with windmills. Water was then run through irrigation ditches. By 1920 crops on 95,000 acres of Kansas farmland were being irrigated, 85% of them located west of Dodge City. When drought hit again in the 1950s, the dust blew, but New Deal practices, including contour plowing, shelterbelts and Soil Conservation Districts, helped hold some of the dirt down. Today center-pivot irrigation will prevent the dust storms, as long as the aquifers hold out.

Farm Math

A typical farm during the early 1900s was 160 acres. Figure out how many bushels of wheat a typical farm produced in each year.

1930 – It took 5 acres to produce 100 bushels of wheat

1955 – It took 4 acres to produce 100 bushels of wheat

1965 – It took 3 1/3 acres to produce 100 bushels of wheat

What types of inventions do you think helped a farmer produce more wheat?

List all the ways you saw farm machines being powered in the exhibition:

Now and Then

Look at the images in the section on farming. What types of equipment were replaced by today's farm implements?

NOW

Pickup truck

Gasoline tractor

Combine

Hay baler

Gang plow
(plow with multiple blades)

THEN



Compare And Contrast Agricultural Buildings

Look at the photograph of a farm from Kansas Farm Bureau. Which of the artworks looks most like a real Kansas farm? Which ones seem to be romanticized?

As you look at the artworks featuring mills and grain elevators you will notice some differences. What would cause some of these differences?

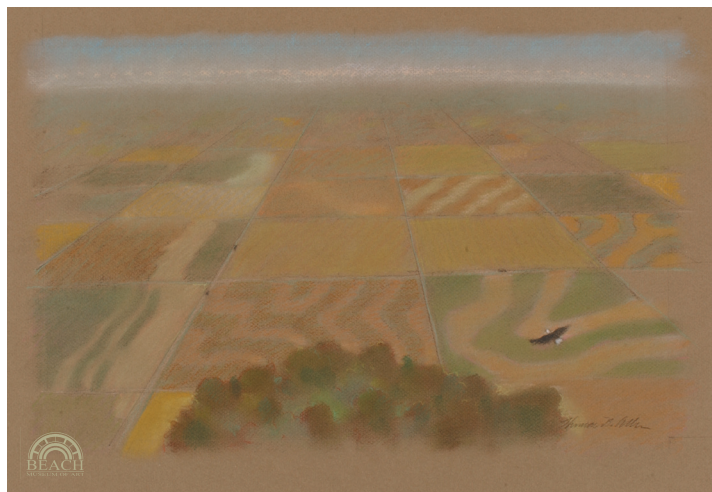
As you travel around Kansas today, watch for mills, elevators, silos, and windmills. Think about how they are the same and how they are different from the ones featured in the exhibition.

More Math

Soden's Mill in Emporia could grind 350 bushels of wheat in a day in 1920. How many bushels would it grind in a week? (Do you think the mill was in operation on Sundays?)

Vanishing Point Perspective Art Project

What would you see from the top of a Kansas Skyscraper? Here is one view by artist Thomas B. Allen. This is the original pastel drawing for the book *Climbing Kansas Mountains*. Notice how the "squares" of the fields are not square. This is because the artist used linear perspective (often called train track perspective) or scientific perspective; this is based on the fact that two parallel lines will converge on the horizon/in the background. This point on the horizon is called the vanishing point. Look for diagonal or the appearance of diagonal lines in the work. This makes the picture seem more real.



A Table So Big.... by Thomas B. Allen, 1993

To create your own work using linear perspective, try this:

Supplies:

Rulers

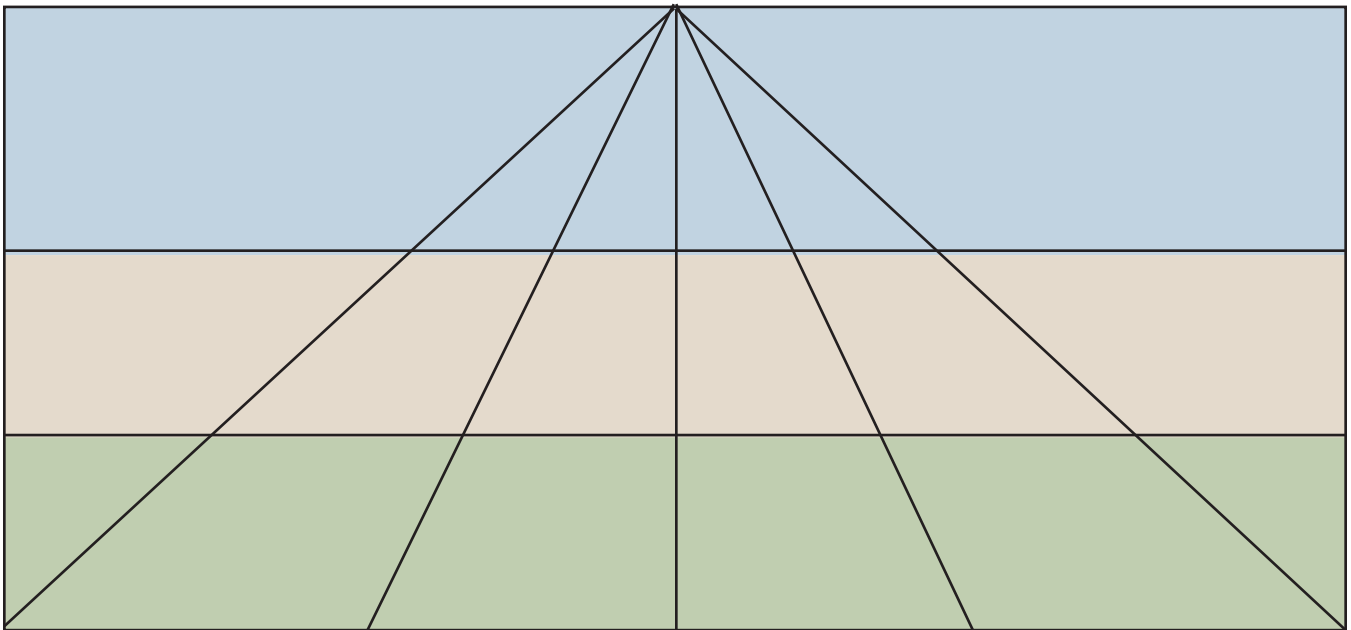
Pencils

Erasers

Large sheets of white paper

Pastels, colored pencils, or crayons

1. Position your paper horizontally. Draw a dot at the top edge in the very center.
2. At the bottom of your paper place 3 or 4 dots equally spaced.
3. Draw a very light line from your bottom dots to the centered dot at the top.
4. Draw a horizontal line across the center of your paper – this is your horizon line – it does not have to be straight because the horizon is perfectly straight.
5. Finally draw a line halfway between the bottom of your paper and the horizon line.
6. Erase the lines above your horizon line.
7. Now you are ready to add colors to your “squares” of field. Use different shades and different patterns.



The American Scene

The artists in this exhibition have often been called American Scene Painters because they recorded a way of life during the 1920s -1950s. As historians, we have used images to learn about life during the time of our grandparents and great grandparents. List three things you learned about life on a farm or ranch during the period from the artworks.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Writing Project

Imagine you were growing up in the 1930s on a farm in Kansas. Write about what your life was like based on what you have learned. What chores would you have been responsible for? What would you have worried about? Do you think you ever got a chance to have fun – what events might have been fun for you? You could write this as a storybook and create illustrations!

Art Project

What would you want your great grandchildren to know about your life today? Make a picture of something that is an important part of your life today. You can turn your picture into a print by tracing it onto a foam printing plate. Notice that the print is the mirror image of the plate.